

**GURU GOBIND SINGH  
HIS LIFE  
MISSION AND MESSAGE**

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## PREFACE

The present account of events in the life of Guru Gobind Singh covers a period of only nine years 1666-1675. The Guru was born in 1666 (December) and he had to shoulder the responsibility of providing temporal and spiritual leadership to the Sikhs when he was a little less than nine years of age.

Naturally the focus is on the events of his life as a child. Due notice has been taken of the time-honoured tradition regarding the events in his life. We have on purpose avoided or ignored the controversies created by modern scholarship. We however, do not deny the academic relevance of such controversies.

The achievements of Guru Gobind Singh in a short span of life (1666-1708) have no parallel. He was a great poet; saint and a scholar as well as a great warrior. He was a creative genius and a man of extraordinary skills. He commanded complete loyalty of his followers. They could lay down their lives for him. But he never aspired for personal power and glory. He suffered so much and yet was never revengful even for a moment. He transformed his disciples into militant fighters for justice but never compromised on ideals. While writing about him one must take due note of the perception of his devotees for whom he was and still continues to be a source of inspiration.

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This humble attempt is in the nature of a homage to the great Master who transformed mere men into heroes entirely unafraid of death. An effort has been made to keep the narrative as simple as possible. We hope to help the young people to have a feel of their glorious heritage.

We shall feel fully rewarded if we are able to rise to the minimum expectations of our readers.

— **Surjit Singh Chawla**

Mor pita poorab kiyas payana  
Bhant bhant ke tirath nahana  
Jab hi jat tribeni bhayye  
Pun dan karat bitayee  
Tahi prakash hamara bhayyo  
Patna Shehr vikhe bhav layyo

— *Bachitra Natak*

(My <sup>h</sup>fater journeyed through the East. He went to various centres of pilgrimage. Then he went to Triveni. He spent his time in meditation and performed charitable acts. I was born in the city of Patna).

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## THE SACRED CITY OF PATNA

Guru Gobind Singh is the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs. He was not only a great warrior. He was also a great scholar and a great poet. Bachitra Natak is a long autobiographical poem written by him. It means 'wonderful Drama'. In this poem the Guru has told us about his life and mission in this world. He says that according to the will of the Almighty he was born in the city of Patna.

The fact that the tenth Guru was born at Patna makes this city sacred for us. It is situated on the banks of river Ganga. At present it is the capital of the state of Bihar. This state has common borders with Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and the ancient kingdom of Nepal.

Patna is an ancient city. It has a glorious past. During the rule of Chandra Gupta Maurya, it was well known throughout the countries of West Asia and Greece. During the rule of Emperor Ashoka its fame spread throughout the Buddhist world which extended over West Asia, and South East Asia.

Guru Gobind Singh was born on 22nd December 1666 A.D. Guru Nanak was born in November 1469 in Talwandi renamed Nankana Sahib (West Pakistan) During this period of about two centuries the Sikh Gurus had become the symbols of hope and moral strength all over the country. The devotees of the Gurus looked upon them as the very

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embodiment of the divine light. A very large number of Sikh congregations (sangats) had come into existence all over India. A large number of Sikhs lived in the city of Patna as well. For them the birth of Guru Gobind Singh was an occasion for great jubilation.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had founded the city of Anandpur. After becoming the ninth Guru of the Sikhs he embarked upon a long journey to preach the message of Guru Nanak. He visited almost all the places which had earlier been visited by Guru Nanak. All along his route he also visited famous centres of Hindu pilgrimage. He held discussions with the Brahmins and spoke to them about the mission of Guru Nanak.

The ninth Guru left the members of his family and some of his prominent disciples like Bhai Dayal Das at Patna, and himself left for Assam. His family consisted of his mother Mata Nanaki, his wife Gujri and her brother Kirpal Chand. He himself left for Bengal from where he had to proceed to Assam. The Ahom kings of Assam had been at war with the Mughals for a very long time. The Guru accompanied Raja Ram Singh who had been appointed the Commander of Mughal forces. The Guru wanted to put an end to the war. The news of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh was conveyed to him while he was in Assam. The admirers and devotees of the Guru were overjoyed to hear the news. The Guru succeeded in putting an end to hostilities and an agreement was arrived at between the Ahom King

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Chakradhwaj and the Commander of Mughal Forces Raja Ram Singh.

At the time of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, his father Guru Tegh Bahadur was away from Patna. Let us keep in mind the fact that the city of Patna is situated at a distance of over one thousand and two hundred kilometres from Amritsar. The congregation at Patna warmly received the holy family. The disciples of the Guru had built a beautiful mansion for the use of the members of the holy family and looked after them with great devotion and affection. This points to the great reverence which the people of Patna had for the ninth Guru and the blessed babe. They insisted that the Guru Gobind should live at Patna for a long time but he had to leave for Bengal from where he proceeded to Assam. He was at Dacca which is now the capital of Bangla Desh. When the news of the birth of a son to him was conveyed to him, he named the child Gobind Rai. At that time Guru Tegh Bahadur was forty nine years of age. Gobind Rai was his only child. But he attached greater importance to the mission of bringing peace to Assam. It was only after three and half years that he saw Gobind Rai at Patna in 1670.

The news of the birth of Gobind Rai was conveyed through messengers to the Sikh Sangats every where. The birth of the child Guru was celebrated with great fervour by the disciples of Guru in Panjab and elsewhere.

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At the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh now stands a magnificent Gurdwara known as Takht Shri Harmandir Sahib. Devotees flock to this sacred place of pilgrimage to pay their homage to the great Guru.

### **CONSIDER ALL AS THE CHILDREN OF THE LORD**

Kau bhayyo mundia sanyasi kau  
Jogi bhayyo kau brahmchari,  
kao jati anman bo  
Hindu Turk kau rafzi Imam safi  
Manas ki jat sabe aike pehchan bo.

— *Akal Ustat. Guru Gobind Singh*

Guru Gobind Singh is known as a Warrior Guru. He is considered to be the saviour of Hindu Dharma. He created the sect of Saint soldiers (Singhs) to fight against injustice. But all the same he believed in the oneness of all mankind. He loved the entire humanity. All human beings, he thought, are the children of the Almighty.

There is something universal about the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The Hindus as well as the Muslims had been the admirers of the Gurus. When Guru Nanak left for his heavenly abode, the Hindus wanted to cremate his mortal remains while the Muslims wanted to give these an honourable burial.

Sayyad Bhikhan Shah (also known as Shah Bhikh) was a revered Muslim saint. He used to live in village Siana in Karnal district (Haryana). He had

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a large number of disciples and spent most of his time absorbed in meditation on God. Once while meditating he saw the horizon in the East lit with divine light. With his mind's eye he saw that the blessed babe (Gobind Rai) had appeared in the city of Patna.

He was overwhelmed with the desire to have a glimpse of the holy child. He left his monastery in the company of few selected disciples and embarked upon the journey to the distant city of Patna. He travelled on foot for about twelve thousand kilometers and at last reached his destination. The Guru had so many admirers in Patna that Bhikhan Shah was able to locate the beautiful mansion of Guru Tegh Bahadur in no time.

Saint Bhikhan Shah was eager to have a glimpse of the blessed child. Equally anxious were the large number of disciples and admirers of Guru Tegh Bahadur who had also gathered there with the same purpose. When Kirpal Chand, the maternal uncle of the holy child brought the blessed baby to the door, all assembled bowed in reverence. Saint Bhikhan Shah felt that the child was the very embodiment of the divine light. He put his head at the child's feet. He felt that he had been really blessed by the Almighty. He was just ecstatic.

The saint from Siana, had brought many gifts for the child. Among these were two small earthen vessels, filled with honey. He placed these before the holy child. The child playfully placed both his hands

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on both the vessels. Saint Bhikhan Shah was taken aback. He cried in ecstacy and said, "How wonderful, how great, how admirable". He was overpowered with the feelings of reverence. He bowed before the child once again. He felt that he was fortunate enough to behold the very incarnation of the Lord.

His disciples were rather surprised at his behaviour. They said, "Why did you bring these two vessels? If you wanted to present these to the holy child as gifts, why did you bring these back?" The saint said to his followers, "Listen to me. I shall reveal to you the mystry of the vessels. It was revealed to me that a divine child had come to this world. I thought that the child would either favour the Muslims or the Hindus. If he supports the Hindus, he shall destroy the Muslims. I placed the vessels before the child. The holy child placed his tiny hands on both the vessels. He has clearly shown that he loves both the Muslims and the Hindus. This child is the messenger of the Lord. Bow to him in reverence. He is God in human form.

Tapp sadhat har mohe bulayyo  
 Im keh ke eh lok pathayyo  
 Mein apna sut tohe nivaja  
 Panth parchar karbe kahu saja

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Ek karan prabh mohe pathayyo  
 Tab mein jagat janam dhar ayyo  
 Jim tein kahi tinne time kaheho  
 Avar Kissu te bair na gaheho

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Jo ham ko parmesar uchrehen  
Te sabh narak kund mahe parhen  
Mo ko das tavan ka jano  
Ya mein bhed no ranch pehchano  
Mein hoon param purakh ko dasa  
Dekhan ayo jagat tamasa.

(I was in deep meditation. I was called by the Almighty. He said, "My child go to the world, set up a new sect and give a new way of life to the people.

It was for this purpose that I was born in this world. I way what the Lord told me. I have enmity towards none.

All those who call me God shall be consumed in the fires of hell. Consider me the the servant of the Lord. I am here to watch the drama of life.)

### **COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOW BEFORE**

Gobind Rai was a lovely child. There was something extraordinary about him. He would never cry. His lovely face was ever lit with a fascinating smile that charmed one and all. He lovingly smiled at whosoever called him.

The child Guru was the darling of his mother. His grand mother doted on him. He was exceptionally handsome and attracted intense and immediate attention. His face radiated valour. His eyes overflowed with nectar of life, his voice had the sweetness of honey. When he appeared in public, people could not help bowing to him out of reverence and admiration. His presence created a

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feeling of peace and put an end to anguish and anxiety. He was affectionately called Bala Pritam — the Child Lord by the devotees.

With great love and care, mother Gujri would dress the child. She would attach to his turban a costly and beautiful coxcomb (Kalghi). Donning it the child Guru would go out to play. The devotees would call him Lord of the plume.

There are many fascinating stories about Bala Pritam. Even when he was a child the devotees would seek boons from him. There was a rich lady whose husband owned a fleet of boats. She was issueless and longed to have children. The child Guru touched her head with a stick that he carried at that time. Later on the lady was blessed by the Almighty with five sons.

There was a very poor woman lived in the neighbourhood. She used to make both ends meet by spinning thread on her spinning wheel. The child Guru would go to her house and playfully scatter her cotton balls. The old woman would go to Mata Gujri and complain to her. Mata Gujri would liberally compensate her. This happened many times. One day Mother Gujri called Gobind Rai and said to him, "Dear Me, why do you tease the poor helpless old woman?" The child Guru smiled sweetly and said, "Dear mother I cause her no harm. I do scatter her cotton balls but whatever you give her is much more than what she can ever earn after labouring for months on end". Even in his mischief the child

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Guru was merciful. He showered blessings and benedictions to the delight of the devotees. The rich and the poor were blessed alike.

Gobind Rai was the only child of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He was an object of adoration and admiration. But all the same he loved to play with children of his age. Of course, even at that young age he displayed qualities of leadership. He would organise young children and play war games with them. At time he would ask them to march like soldiers in an army. He himself would lead them.

By temperament the child Guru was extremely generous. He was not unduly attached to the costly toys which the devotees would present to him. He would liberally distribute these among his friends and playmates. He gave moments of anxiety to his uncle Kirpal Chand. It is said that once he entered the river Ganga. Naturally his uncle got worried. But soon he was wonderstruck to see the child Guru coming out of the river safe and sound. Even as a child, Gobind Rai, gave a clear idea of the qualities of head and heart which he was destined to put into use later on for the welfare of mankind.

### **RANA FATEH CHAND MAINI**

There lived in Patna a rich land Lord, Fateh Chand Maini. He was extremely rich and influential. The government had conferred on him the title of Raja. The Raja had a beautiful, obedient and noble wife. They lacked nothing. Still they were unhappy. The Raja was issueless and longed for a son who

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could call her 'Mother'. She felt incomplete without a child. The couple consulted physicians, prayed at religious places, entreated holy man, and even tried all occult practices. But nothing availed them. The Rani had lost all hope. *all in vain*

Pandit Shiv Datt was an intimate friend of the Raja. He was a religious minded person. He would sit for hours on the banks of Ganga and meditate. Once during the course of meditation it was revealed to him that Gobind Rai who used to play on the banks of river Ganga, was a divine child. He was God in human form. Since then, even while meditating in front of the idol, he would constantly think of the child Guru. He was convinced that Gobind Rai was the child of the Almighty Lord Himself. Such was the intensity of his devotion, that he would not go back to his house without casting a glance on the divine face of the child Guru.

Raja Fateh Chand Maini and his wife held Pandit Shiv Datt in great esteem. Because Pandit Shiv Datt was a man of great piety. They went to him in all humility and said, "Please plead on our behalf with the Almighty. Beseech the Lord to make our marriage fruitful. May the Almighty bestow the gift of a son on us". The Pandit said, "Rajaji, I have prayed for you a number of times. He has not answered my prayers. Gobind Rai, who is the son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, is the Lord Himself in human form. Go to him and pray. He shall bless you. All your desires shall be fulfilled".

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The Raja and his Rani, would now, think of Gobind Rai all the time. They became his ardent devotees. One day it so happened that Gobind Rai alongwith his companions went to the mansion of Raja Fateh Chand. The Rani, at that time, was absorbed in meditation. The child Guru sat in the lap of the Rani and just whispered, 'Mother'. She opened her eyes and looked at the holy child sitting in her lap. She felt blessed. A deep sense of contentment filled her very existence. She felt that her prayers had been answered.

Gobind Rai played another prank. He said, "Mother we are awfully hungry. Please give us something to eat". "Right now", said the Rani lovingly. She requested her husband to send some servant to fetch fruits and sweets. But the child Guru said, "No sweets, no fruits. Mother, give us the food that you cooked in the morning". The Rani had cooked fried gram and fried puris. She brought these and distributed the food among the child Guru and his friends.

Gobind Rai alongwith his companions would frequently visit the mansion of Raja Fateh Chand and relish the puris and the fried gram. She would serve to them. The Rani's desire for having a son was fulfilled. They converted their beautiful mansion into a Gurdwara which is now called Gurdwara Maini Sangat. Even today Puris and fried gram is served to the congregation in this Gurdwara.

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## GOBIND GHAT

There is a ghat on the banks of river Ganga which is named Gobind Ghat (river bank). A beautiful memorial has been built there in memory of the Child Guru.

Pandit Shiv Datt, as we have already said, was a devout Brahmin. He was a devotee of the Thakur. In the early hours of the morning, he would come to the bank of river Ganga and meditate for hours together in front of the idols of gods. He would meditate and with his mind's eye see the divine visage of the child Guru. Keeping in view the dedication of Pandit Shiv Datt, the child Guru would come to the bank of the Ganga to enable Pandit Shiv Datt to have a look at the child Guru. The Brahmins were angry with Pandit Shiv Datt for having abandoned the idols of Tha kur and worshipping the child Guru. But Pandit Shiv Datt remained steadfast in his devotion to the child Guru.

## DEPARTURE FROM PATNA

The Guru had admirers not only among the Hindus. Even some prominent Muslims had great admiration for him. In the city of Patna there lived two brothers Nawab Rahim Bakhsh and Nawab Karim Bakhsh. They were big landlords and businessmen. It is said that Guru Tegh Bahadur was fascinated with the solitude and beauty of their gardens blossomed with the presence of the Guru. The Nawab brothers felt blessed. They started admiring and adoring the Guru. When the Guru was

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away from Patna, they would look after the holy family with great devotion.

There was a rich businessman in Patna. He was known as Jagta Seth because he had many business establishments. He had immense wealth but he longed to have a son who could inherit his wealth. He had married thrice but none of his three wives could give birth to a son.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur was at Patna, he served him with great dedication. He would attend the holy assemblies every day and listen to the hymns being sung there. He would pray for the gift of a son. With the blessings of the Guru, three sons were born to him.

In the absence of Guru Tegh Bahadur from Patna, Jagta Seth took special care of the holy family. He visited the holy family with his three wives and presented precious toys, a dagger and a bow and arrows to the child Guru.

When the child Guru was three and half years of age, Guru Tegh Bahadur had come to Patna. He had stayed there for some days and then left for Panjab. He told the members of his family to stay back at Patna for some more time. When the child Guru was a little over five years of age a message was received from Anandpur that the family should leave Patna for Anandpur Sahib.

The news of the likely departure of the child Guru cast a gloom among the devotees. In those days a large number of Sikhs lived in Patna. The

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child Guru had endeared himself to one and all. Of course, the child Guru was happy at the thought of being with his father Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur Sahib. Mother Gujri and mother Nanaki were also happy. But the devotees were grief-stricken. The very thought of the child Guru leaving them for good saddened them. Pandit Shiv Datt considered the child Guru as the incarnation of the Almighty. Raja Fateh Chand and his Rani felt as if they were taking leave of their own son. For the Nawab brother the child Guru was the embodiment of the divine light. His playmates were unhappy when they thought of losing their beloved companion. For thousands of his devotees the child Guru was the very source of blessings and benedictions.

It was the month of March 1671. On the day of departure a large number of devotees and admirers congregated to bid an affectionate and tearful farewell to the holy family and their beloved and blessed Bala Pritam. The child Guru consoled Rani and Raja Fateh Chand, Pandit Shiv Datt, Jagta Seth and the members of the congregation and requested them to meditate on God and do service to the suffering humanity.

### **THE OLD WOMAN OF DANAPUR**

Danapur is a small place situated at a distance of fourteen miles from Patna. When the holy family left Patna a large number of devotees accompanied them. It appeared as if a caravan was on the move.

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Mother Nanaki and mother Gujri travelled by planquins whereas other members of the party travelled by bullock carts. The devotees accompanied the party up to Dana Pur. Jagta Seth had a business establishment here. He had made arrangements for the comfortable stay of the child Guru and the members of the holy family. At Danapur the devotees were asked to go back to Patna.

There lived an old woman at Dana <sup>b</sup>Pur. She had the honour of serving khichri (rice and lentils) which she had so lovingly cooked in an earthen pot when Guru Tegh Bahadur passed Danapur. Gobind Rai thought of the old woman.

It so happened that as the child Guru mentioned the old lady to the congregation, she came there. She bowed to him. She said with great reverence, "I have cooked rice and lentils in the same pot in which I had cooked khichri for his revered father Guru Tegh Bahadur. For the rest of the devotees she had baked chapatis. The child Guru partook of the porridge with great relish. The old lady felt blessed. She converted her house into a Gurdwara which is known Handi di Sangat (Congregation of the earthen pot).

During the reign of Guru Har Rai, a Sanyasi named Bhagwan Gir who belonged to Gaya, had become a disciple of the Guru and worked as a preacher in that area. The followers of Bhagwan Gir are found in Danapur. They are mainly udasi Sikhs.

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**SANGAT MARDANG WALI**

Leaving Danapur the party passed through Ara, Dumraon Baksar and many other villages. These villages are situated on the southern side of the river Ganga. Then the party reached Chhota Mirzapur. This town is situated four miles south of Benaras. Many Sikhs used to live there. From here the party proceeded towards Benaras. On the way they halted at Jaunpur in the north west of Benaras. Many sikhs lived there. Bhai Gurbux Masand was in charge of the Sangat. This town had also been visited by Bhai Gurdas. Guru Tegh Bahadur had also visited Jaunpur. The Guru had given a musical instrument called Mardang to Bhai Gurbux. There is a Gurdwara at Jaunpur. It is called Sangat Mardang Wali.

Bhai Gurbux came to Benaras to pay homage to the child Guru. He was accompanied by a large number of Sikhs who presented the Guru with a large number of gifts. The Sikhs felt blessed when the Guru accepted their gifts.

All the Sikh Gurus were embodiment of kindness. They had great sympathy for the poor, the weak and the down-trodden. The ninth Guru, was famous for his generosity. Guru Gobind Singh also followed in his father's foot steps. Even as a child he was wise beyond his years. His innocence and wisdom fascinated one and all. Wherever he went, the devotees flocked to him in large numbers. They were eager to pay homage to Gobind Rai who looked like a prince and talked like a sage.

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Benaras is a holy city on the banks of river Ganga. It is also called Varanasi and Kashi. The ninth Guru had stayed here for over seven months. He had a large number of devotees. They built a Gurdwara in his memory. Gobind Rai and the members of the holy family stayed at Benaras at that very spot. The child Guru stayed here for several days. Sikhs in large number congregated there to have a glimpse of the child Guru. They would call him Bala Pritam. Holy assemblies were held in the morning as well as in the evening. The disciples presented the child Guru with precious gifts. But the child Guru would distribute these among the poor and the needy.

One day Bhai Gurubux said to the child Guru, "Your disciples offer these gifts to you. These are for your personal use. They feel unhappy when you give these gifts to others". The child Guru said, "Blessed are the disciples who have brought these precious gifts for me. The Lord shall bless them. Their offerings have immensely pleased me. But I feel still more happy by giving these away to the poor and the needy. Please share my happiness with me. Don't feel dissatisfied if I do not put these gifts to my use". Such was the child Guru's concern for the poor and suffering people. Like his noble father he had no attachment with the good things of life. He lived and died for promoting the social, spiritual and financial welfare of the people of India. He was a great warrior. But at the same time he embodied in himself compassion and kindness.

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**CASTE ALONE AVAILS NOTHING**

Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism did not believe in caste system. A large number of his devotees belonged to the so called lower castes. He believed that a man should live by the sweat of his brow. He should meditate on God and share his earnings with others. In that age of intolerance when the Hindus considered Muslims as untouchables, Mardana a low caste Muslim was his constant being as the children of God was continued by the other Gurus as well.

While Gobind Rai was still at Kashi, a learned Brahmin came to the congregation. He wanted to verify for himself whether the child Guru actually possessed divine wisdom.

The Brahmins believed in their superiority. They thought that they alone had the right to accept offerings from the devotees. He said to the child Guru, "You belong to the warrior class. You are Khatri. Why do you accept charities. The Shastras give this right to the Brahmins only".

The child Guru said to the Brahmin, "Sir, you are a learned Brahmin. You are well versed in the Vedas and Shastras. People come to me and offer gifts. They think I am Lord's own child. They come here to seek freedom from fear of death. They wish to attain spiritual salvation. Their offerings are used for digging wells and promoting the welfare of the people".

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These words of wisdom had a powerful effect on the learned Brahmin. The child Guru smiled and said, "Respected Pandit ji, tell me, was Raja Janak a Brahmin or a Khatri? Why did Brahmins like Sukhdev worshipped him?"

The learned Brahmin felt at the child Guru's feet. The Guru said to him, "Recite Lord's name. Seek salvation at the Lord's Lotus feet. He loves one and all. Idol worship is of no use. Penance alone cannot purify a man. Meditate on the Lord. He shall bless you".

### **FROM ALLAHABAD TO AYODHYA**

The holy family resumed the journey to Anadpur. After halting at several places they reached Prayag. This sacred city of the Hindus is situated at the point where Ganga-Yamuna and Saraswati meet one another. This spot is called Triveni. This city was renamed Allahabad during the Muslim rule. The members of the holy family stayed in the same house in which the ninth Guru had stayed during his visit to this city. This house is situated in a locality called Maya pur. While on his way to Assam the ninth Guru had halted at Allahabad. The house has since been converted into a Gurdwara.

From Prayag the party proceeded to Ayodhya which is the birth place of Lord Ram Chandra. The town had earlier been visited by Guru Nanak. Guru Tegh Bahadur had also stayed here for some time. He had become the symbol of hope for the Hindus. Wherever he went they would flock to him in large

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numbers. A Gurdwara now stands on the banks of river Saryo which flows by the side of this city. This Gurdwara is a memorial to the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

As was the practice with the holy family, congregations were held at Ayodhya also. People would assemble in large numbers to listen to the Kirtan. Religious discourses were also held. The devotees would feel blessed as they had a glimpse of the child Guru.

It so happened that some monkeys would come to the congregation and listen to the kirtan quietly. The people of Ayodhya thought that Gobind Rai the child Guru was the incarnation of Lord Ramchandra. They had the same sentiment of reverence for the child Guru as they had for Lord Ramchandra.

As a matter of fact the Sikh Gurus had become a source of hope and inspiration for the Hindus who had been living under the Muslim rule for over six and a half centuries. They were being harassed and humiliated by Emperor Aurangzeb. They were sure that the Gurus alone could help them in saving their religious identity and stick to the faith of their forefathers.

## **FROM AYODHYA TO HARDWAR**

From Ayodhya the party moved to Nanak Mata. Earlier it was known as Gorakh Mata. Guru Nanak had visited this place. Here he had a discussion with the yogis. Guru Hargobind had also paid a visit to

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Nanak Mata to help a devotee of the Guru known as Almast who had been harassed by the Yogis. The child Guru stayed here for a few days. Then the party proceeded to Pilibhit where the holy family was received by Raja Shamsheer Bahadur. His father, Baz Bahadur was a disciple of the fifth Guru.

Dev Gaon was the next stop. Here they were received by Baba Sundershaah who looked after a Gurdwara which had been built in the memory of Bidhi Chand who was a disciple of Guru Hargobind. The udasi saints looked after the child Guru and all the other members of the party with great affection and dedication. The child Guru presented them with a sword which is still preserved in the Gurdwara and is an object of worship for the devotees.

After leaving Dev Gaon the party proceeded to Mathura. On the way it halted at Lucknow and Bathur, a small town situated on the banks of river Ganga. Halting at a few more places on the way the party reached Hardwar and stayed at a Gurdwara at Kankha on the outskirts of the city. This Gurdwara had been built to commemorate the visit of the third Guru. From there the party moved in the southern direction and passed through Booria and Damla. At last it reached Lukhnaur. This town is situated at about five kilometres south of Ambala. A message from Guru Teghbahadur was received here. The Guru had instructed that his family should stay at Lukhnaur for a couple of months. According to some Sikh chronicles the party stayed at Lukhnaur for two

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months. Every one was eager to reach Anandpur at the earliest but they had to obey Guru Tegh Bahadur's orders.\*

### **CHILD GURU AND THE MUSLIM SAINTS AT LUKHNAUR**

The Gurus had acquired great reputation. They believed in universal love. They did not discriminate against or in favour of people on the basis of their colour, caste or creed. They believed in the principle of equality of all human beings. They believed that all human beings are the children of the same God. The Gurus were admired by both the Hindus and the Muslims. A large number of Muslims considered Guru Nanak as their Pir (Spiritual Saviour) and wanted to bury his mortal remains when the Guru left for his heavenly abode. The Mughal Emperor Akbar had great regard for Guru Amar Das. The Sufi Saint Mian Mir was a close friend of Guru Arjun Dev. Mohsin Fani the author of Dabistan-e-Mazahib was a Parsi. He was a personal friend of Guru Hargobind. The Gurus thus enjoyed universal respect and reverence.

At the time of Gobind Rai's birth a Muslim Sufi Saint Shah Bhikan had come to Patna to pay homage to the divine child. When the Pir came to know that the holy child<sup>had</sup> been camping in Lukhnaur, he went there to have a glimpse of the holy child.

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\* It has also been stated that the child Guru and the other members of the family stayed at Lukhnaur for about seven months.

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He was accompanied by another Muslim saint Mir Din.

Pir Bhikhan Shah bowed to the child Guru. At that time the Guru was absorbed in games with his playmates. With great reverence he took the child Guru in his arms. He took him aside and said, "I feel that the cruel rule of the Mughals shall soon come to an end. There shall be great upheaval. Your disciples shall rule over the land. O great master, tell me shall my successors survive and flourish?" The child Guru put the fears of Sayyad Bhikhan Shah to rest. He said, "Do not worry. Power shall change hands. There will be great upheavels. Your successors shall flourish for a long time. Your home and hearth shall be in tact and people shall flock to your abode for times to come".

Pir Bhikhan Shah's companion was taken aback. He could not understand why a devout Muslim like Pir Bhikhan Shah should bow with reverence to a Hindu child. He could not contain his anxiety. He said, "Sir, why did you bow to a child who does not believe in Mohammad? Is this not forbidden in Islam?" Pir Bhikhan Shah said, "This child is divine. He is the child of God Himself. He has been blessed with divine glory and wisdom. He shall put an end to injustice and tyranny. I prayed to him to bless my successors in times of turmoil. He has assured me that my lineage shall continue and devotees shall continue coming to my abode for paying homage to the Almighty".

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The visit of Pir Bhikhan Shah shows that the Gurus were respected by the Muslims as well. Mughal Emperors like Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb had been hostile to them. But Muslim Pirs who had attained high level of spirituality had good deal of reverence for them. They considered the Gurus to be men of God and there was something divine about them.

Once when the child Guru was playing with his companions, a Muslim saint Pir Araf Din passed that way. He was being carried in a planquin. As he looked at the child Guru he felt as if he was looking at a person endowed with divinity. At once he asked the planquin bearers to stop. He alighted from the planquin. Directly he went to the child Guru. It appeared to him that the child Guru shone like a moon in the galaxy of stars. Divine light radiated from his face. There was a spiritual glow in his eyes. A fascinating smile played on the lips of the child Guru. There was something distinctly spiritual about the child Guru. For a moment the Pir forgot that he was a Muslim and his religion forbade him to bow before anyone excepting the Almighty. He bowed to the child. He saluted him and respectfully asked, "Who are you?" The child Guru smiled charmingly and said, "People call me Gobind". The Pir bowed once again said, "They are correct. Your eyes radiate divine light. You are divine. Allah and Almighty may bless you. May you show the true path of virtue to mankind". As the Pir was about to enter the planquin, his followers asked him, "Being a Muslim why did you bow to an unbeliever son? It is not an

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act of infidelity?" Pir Araf Din told his followers, "I know not what is meant by infidelity? I know only my God. I saw the glow of the divine light in the child and saluted him. This child shall one day become the source of new life, courage and hope for millions of people".

### **DEPARTURE FOR KIRATPUR**

At least a message was received from the ninth Guru that the family could leave for Anand Pur. All were overjoyed at the thought that soon they would reach their destination.

The journey was resumed. On the way the members of the holy family halted at Rano Majra, Kalor and Ropar. Then they reached Kiratpur. At the time of departure from Lukhnaur, a large number of devotees from Lukhnaur as well as neighbouring villages had gathered in large numbers to bid an affectionate farewell to the child Guru. At Kiratpur the child Guru was warmly welcomed by Baba Suraj Mal the borhter of Guru Hargobind. Many disciples of Guru Hargobind had settled at Kiratpur. The arrival of the child Guru was a cause of great happiness for all of them.

For a few days the holy family stayed at Kiratpur. This town is situated at a distance of five miles (eight kilometers) from Anandpur. On the outskirts of Anandpur a large number of devotees had gathered to receive the holy family. They were singing hymns. Their hearts were overflowing with devotion and love for the child Guru. He was welcomed with great love and affection.

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It was February 1672. The child Guru was a littler over six years of age. He had met his father at Patna when he was almost three and half years of age. Guru Tegh Bahadur had to rush to Panjab when he was informed about the atrocities being committed against the Hindus by Emperor Aurangzeb. When the child Guru was over five years of age a message was sent to the holy family. The ninth Guru has asked them to embark upon their journey to Anandpur. When the child Guru reached Anandpur he was six years and two months old.

Guru Tegh Bahadur came out of his mansion to receive the child Guru. Gobind Rai was overwhelmed with feelings of reverence for his father. He placed his head at the feet of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru affectionately picked him up and embraced him. It was a heart warming scene. It had a great emotional effect on the devotees who had gathered there. The ninth Guru sat thān on the throne with Gobind Rai in his lap. Hymns were being chanted to the accompaniment of soft soulful music. The entire atmosphere was surcharged with love and affection and joy.

Maddar desh ham ko le aye  
 Bhant bhant dayi anni dulrayye  
 Kini anik bhant tann rachha  
 Dini bhant bhant ki sichha  
 Jab ham dharm karm ko ayye  
 Dev lok tab pita siddayye

— *Bachitra Natak*



(I was taken to maddar Desh (Panjab) I was blessed with love and affection. All arrangements were made for my safety. Various types of training was imparted to me. When I learnt to perform my duties in accordance with religious principles, my father left for his heavenly abode.)

### **LIFE AT ANANDPUR**

Guru Tegh Bahadur was away from Patna at the time of the birth of Gobind Rai. When the holy child was almost three and a half years of age, Guru Tegh Bahadur had stopped at Patna for a short while and then left for Panjab. When Gobind Rai reached Anandpur he was over six years of age. He was blessed with paternal affection at Anandpur.

There was something unique about him. It marked him apart from other children of his age. He was wise beyond his years. He had a lovely and dignified appearance. His mother and grand mother looked after him very well. A number of attendants also were always at his service— He was brought up like a prince.

Gobind Rai engaged in playful activities of childhood alongwith his friends. He loved outdoor life but at the same time he had a meditative bent of mind and immensely enjoyed listening to Kirtan and religious discourses. He had the interests and inclinations of a sportsman and the temper of a sage. He was fearless but would not domineer over others. His heart overflowed with affection. He was adored by his playmates.

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Gobind Rai was fond a walking, riding and swimming. Guru Tegh Bahadur made arrangements for the protection of the Guru. Champat Rai an ardent devotee was entrusted with making security arrangements.

Arrangements were made for providing education to the child Guru. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself would devote personal attention to the child and would talk to him at length about matters both temporal and spiritual. The Guru himself was a great scholar and poet. He was a saint as well as a soldier. Gobind Rai imbibed these qualities and besides acquiring academic skills, became a great patron of learned. Guru Gobind Singh himself was a great poet. He also patronised poets from all over India. The tenth Guru was a great soldier as well as a saint. He was fearless but never gave up compassion and kindness. Like his father he too believed in renunciation and could make any sacrifice for bringing comfort and consolation to the suffering humanity.

The child Guru was taught Gurmukhi by Harjas Rai who was the newphew of Bhai Mati Das. Later on Bhai Mati Das laid down his life for the glory of the Guru and the Sikhs. He had accompanied Guru Tegh Bahadur to Delhi and a day before the Guru was martyred, he was sawn vertically.

The city of Anandpur was founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur. Amritsar had been founded by Guru

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Ram Das. Guru Amar Das had established the township of Goindwal. Kirat Pur owes its existence to Guru Hargobind. The Sikh Gurus had multi-dimensional personalities. They were spiritual leaders, poets scholars, warriors and even town planners. Whenever a new city was founded, they would invite people from all sections of society to settle there.

During the Muslim rule Persian was the official language. In towns and cities, schools were set up for teaching Persian. There was such a school at Anand-Pur also. Pir Mohammad Kazi used to teach Persian to the child Guru. Arrangements were made to teach him Hindi and Sanskrit. The child Guru was quick at learning. He was a genius. His teachers were impressed with his scholarship. They thought that he was the very chosen child of the Lord and possessed divine powers. The Kazi came to look at the Guru with great reverence.

Gobind Rai was provided extensive training in martial arts. He also excelled in hunting, riding and swimming. His father appointed instructors to train him in different fields. Several other children were given education alongwith the child Guru. Sham Das and Gulab Rai sons of Guru Tegh Bahadur's brother Suraj Mal, Mohri son of Guru Tegh Bahadur's sister Bibi Viro, also received education alongwith him. Mani Singh, Kirtia, Tara, Alam and Gursaran son of Gurbux were also his school mates. The child Guru excelled all in learning academic skills and mastering martial arts.

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Comprehensive education was thus imparted to the child Guru. It helped him in acquiring mastery in scholarly and spiritual pursuits. Guru Tegh Bahadur knew that Gobind Rai would have to provide leadership not only to the Sikhs but to the whole of India in very difficult circumstances. It was owing to his own extraordinary qualities of head and heart, his spiritual strength and divine consciousness of his own mission and the training imparted to him by his great spiritually liberated, saintly scholar, poet philosopher and warrior father Guru Tegh Bahadur that the child Guru rose to the occasion and provided dynamic and revolutionary leadership to the Sikhs after Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. In many of the stories regarding the childhood of Guru Gobind Singh it is frequently stated that holy men like Pir Bhikhan Shan, Pir Araf Din, The Nawab borthers, Pandit Shiv Datt, Raja Fateh Chand Maini and multitudes of his admirers thought that Gobind Rai was God Himself. But the Guru had no such ideas about himself. On the contrary he has very clearly stated that those who regard him as God shall be consumed by the fires of hell. He regarded himself as a mere servant of the Lord.\*

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\* *Mo ko das tavan ka jano  
Ya mein bhed na ranch pehchano  
Main hoon param purakh ko dasa  
Dekhan ayo jagat tamasha.*

*(Consider me the slave of the Lord. Do not entertain any doubts regarding this. I have come to the world to see the earthly spectacle.)*

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And yet his devotees felt that he was the very incarnation of the Almighty. This was so because they had seen in the person of the holy child the glow of the divine light. Furthermore the Gurus were held in great esteem. They were the source of confidence and hope for millions of people who had been subjected to social and political and cultural torture for centuries on end. In the presence of the Gurus these persons felt blessed. They sought spiritual solace at their feet and felt that there was something divine about them. For these people the Gurus were really the very incarnation of God Almighty.

Deh Shiva bar mohene<sup>-h a i</sup>, Shubh karman te kabhoon na taroon.

— *Chandi Charitra*.

'O Lord give me the boon that I may never give up the path of good actions.'

Hargobind prabhu lok sidhare  
 Har Rai teh naan bithare  
 Hari Krishan tin ke sut bhayye  
 Tin ke Tegh Bahadur bhayye  
 Tilak Janju Rakja Prabh taka  
 Kino bado kalu mahe saka  
 Sadhan het itti jin kari  
 Sis diya par see na uchri  
 Dharm het saaka jin kiya  
 Sis diya par sirrar na diya.

(When Guru Hargobind left for his heavenly abode Guru Hari Rai became the apostle. Hari

Krishan was his son. After him Tegh Bahadur became the Guru. He protected the sacred thread and sacred mark (tilak) of the Hindus. He laid down his life but did not groan even for a moment. He gave up his life for the sake of Dharma. He sacrificed his life but kept his integrity intact.

— *Bachitra Natak*

### **BRAHMINS FROM KASHMIR**

It was the year 1675 A.D. Aurangzeb had ruled over India for the last seventeen years. He had become the Emperor in 1658 by imprisoning his own father emperor Shah Jahan who had to spend the rest of his life in the prison. Aurangzeb was formally crowned as Emperor of India on 31st July 1658. After getting his brothers beheaded he arranged for a second coronation on fourth December 1661.

Aurangzeb was a staunch Muslim. He was a Sunni Muslim and could not tolerate even the Muslims belonging to the Shia sect. His religious policy was basically anti Hindu. He used all available means to convert Hindus to Islam. He would even excuse corrupt Hindu officers if they agreed to embrace Islam. If the sons of a Zamindar accepted Islam he would give his father's Zamindari to him. Gifts were showered on those who embraced Islam and promotions were given to such people. If a Hindu who had a property case in a court, embraced Islam the case would be decided in his favour. The Hindu temples were frequently

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demolished. Despite the fact that Rajputs were his partners in powers, he did not hesitate to humiliate the Hindus.

For over six centuries the Hindus had been ruled over by the Muslims. They could hardly win any significant victories against the Muslim invaders. Naturally they were demoralised. Most of the Rajput Kings had accepted the overlordship of Muslim rulers and helped them in extending their empires.

Emperor Aurangzeb's policy of converting Hindus to Islam with the help of state power, created discontentment among the Hindus. The Satnamis near Narnaul (District Mohindergarh, Haryana) and the Jats near Mat hura revolted but their revolts were cruelly crushed.

During the year 1674-75 Aurangzeb was camping in West Panjab to crush a Pathan Rebellion. During his stay in Panjab, local officials acted most cruelly against the Hindus. They terrorised a large number of them to Islam. In 1671 Iftikhar Khan was appointed the governor of Kashmir. He ruled over Kashmir till 1675. He was eager to fully implement the religious policy of Aurangzeb. In Kashmir thousands of Pandits were forced to embrace Islam. A large number of Brahmins had been imprisoned with the hope that if these Brahmins embraced Islam, their followers will also follow suit.

The Brahmins could not hope to get any help from Hindu kings. Under the leadership of Kirpa Ram Datt of Mattan, they decided to go to Anand

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Pur to request Guru Tegh Bahadur to help them in their hour of crisis. Kirpa Ram Datt had been teaching Sanskrit to Gobind Rai. He knew that only the spiritual strength of Guru Tegh Bahadur could save the Brahmins. About five hundred pandits from Kashmir and other religious centres like Krukshetra, proceeded to Anand<sup>P</sup>Pur. They knew that the Hindu kings who had accepted the subordination of the Mughal Emperors, could do nothing to help them. They knew that Guru Hargobind had fought successfully against the Mughal Chiefs.

So the sorrow stricken Brahmins came to Anandpur. They bowed with reverence to the Guru and said,

"Protect us O Lord the son of Guru Hargobind. Hear our pathetic please O Guru Tegh Bahadur. You are the protector of the poor and the cow. You are th Prophet of the Almighty in Kalyug. We have none to go to for help. Our condition is most pitiable. Protect us the way Lord Krishna protected Dropdi. We have gone from pillar to post. You are the Lord Krishna of the present age. We have no other hope We seek refuge at thy feet, O, Lord." \*

The Guru was deeply moved on listening to the stories of sorrow and suffering related by the Brahmins. He said that their problem could be solved only if some man of truthfulness and integrity offered himself for sacrifice to save the faith of the Hindus. Every one was stunned into silence.

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\* SHAHID BILAS by poet Sewa Singh

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At that time Gobind Rai was hardly nine years old. He came to the Darbar. He saw a crowd of Pandits sitting there in distress. He also saw that his father was in a thoughtful mood. He said to his father, "Why are you so thoughtful and pensive?" The ninth Guru said, "You see these sorrow stricken Brahmins. They are being forced to give up their religion. They can be protected if some holy man offers himself for sacrifice for the Brahmins".

With folded hands the child Guru said, "Who else is a holier man, more fit for being sacrificed than yourself, for saving the Hindu religion".

Guru Tegh Bahadur replied, "I have absolutely no hesitation in giving my head but I am grieving that you are still a child. Who will take care of you after me?" "Almighty will look after me," said the brave child Guru.

It was a test of the spiritual strength of Gobind Rai and he rose to the occasion to the delight of his father.

Thus willingly the child Guru sacrificed his father for saving the harassed and helpless Brahmins. He was truly the great son of a great father. Guru Tegh Bahadur himself was known as Tyag Mal when he was a child because he had no attachment with the worldly possessions. Gobind Rai also displayed divine detachment. He was a worthy heir to the great spiritual tradition created and strengthened by the Sikh Gurus.

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Guru Tegh Bahadur advised the Brahmins to go to Aurangzeb and tell him that they would be ready to embrace Islam if Tegh Bahadur who was their Guru would first be converted. The Brahmins went to Zalim Khan the Governor of Lahore and told him of the Guru's resolve. The Governor of Kashmir was asked not to convert Brahmins to Islam forcibly.

The Guru held a meeting with his prominent disciples and asked them to make preparations for his departure to Delhi. The Guru's disciples were plunged in grief but the Guru told them to cheerfully submit themselves to the will of God Almighty.

### **THE SUPREME SACRIFICE**

A congregation was held at Anandpur on July 8, 1675. Guru Tegh Bahadur appointed Gobind Rai the tenth Guru. Bhai Gurditta applied the Tilak to the child Guru. Bhai Gurditta was a descendant of Bhai Gurdass. Guru Tegh Bahadur asked the Sikhs to consider Gobind Rai as the tenth Guru. He told them that the time for his departure had come. Before his departure for Delhi the Guru made all possible arrangements.

The devotees were in a sad mood and bade him a tearful farewell on Eleventh July 1675. The Guru consoled his sikhs and told them that the tenth Guru would look after them. He further told them that the new Guru would be a great warrior and he would found a distinct panth.

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At the time <sup>of</sup> departure, Guru Tegh Bahadur was accompanied by four of his most devoted disciples who like him were willing to court death. Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das, Bhai Dayal Das and Bhai Gurdittavi were his disciples and he had complete confidence in them.

The Guru alongwith his disciples was arrested at village Malik Pur Ranghran new Ropar and taken to Delhi. They reached Delhi on fourth November 1675. The Guru refused to embrace Islam. He also refused to show miracles to prove that he had divine powers. Bhai Mati Das, Sati Das and Bhai Dayal Das also refused to give up their religion. On 10th November 1675 Bhai Mati Das was sawn in twain. Bhai Sati Das was burnt alive and Bhai Dayal Das was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil.

On 11th November 1675 Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred on the very spot on which his three beloved disciples had been done to death in the most cruel manner. A crowd had gathered when the Guru was martyred. The Emperor had issued the orders that Guru Tegh Bahadur's body should be cut into pieces and these should be hung on different sides of the city.

The crowd included a large number of the disciples of the Guru. The Emperor wanted to strike terror in the hearts of the people by dishonouring the mortal remains of the Guru. But his orders could not be carried out. The Imperial design was frustrated by the devoted disciples of the Guru.

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Lakhi Shah Vanjara was a prosperous and influential merchant who supplied provisions to the Royal armies. He alongwith his sons appeared on the scene. They had a large number of carts. When they reached near the spot where the Guru had been martyred, they moved forward at a great speed. People thought that their bullocks were not under their control. There was a lot of confusion. people ran helter skelter. A dust storm was raised by the movement of the caravan. Taking advantage of the confusion the body of the martyred Guru was removed by Lakhi Shah and his sons. They brought the body to their village Rai Saina and set their own house on fire to cremate the body of <sup>Tej Bahadur</sup> ~~Rakab Ganj~~ their beloved Guru. A grand <sup>U. K. K.</sup> ~~Gurdwara~~ now stands on the spot on which the body of the Guru was cremated.

### CREMATION AT ANANDPUR

Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dayal Das — the three devoted and fearless disciples had been martyred on 10th November 1675 in the most cruel manner. The authorities aimed at frightening the Guru so that he might accept Islam. They did not succeed in their design. The Guru remained steadfast in his resolve. On the order of the Emperor the Guru was martyred on 11th November 1675. The Emperor had also issued the orders that after putting the Guru to death his body should be cut into pieces and these be hung on different sides of the city. The orders of the Emperor aimed at striking terror in the hearts of the Hindus. He wanted to

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demoralise the disciples of the Guru. Once again he failed to achieve his aim. Of course he had succeeded in putting an end to the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur but even after laying down his life the Guru owned victory over the unjust and cruel Emperor. Four devoted disciples of the Guru had made up their mind to disobey the orders of the mighty Emperor. They could not tolerate that the mortal remains of their Guru should be shown disrespect.

Bhai Jaita, Bhai Nanua, Bhai Uda and Bhai Gurditta had met at the house of Bhai Jaita in the Dilwali Street in Delhi (Chandni Chowk) on the night of tenth November 1675. These disciples knew no fear. The teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur had freed them from the fear of death. Bhai Jaita had made up his mind that the severed head of the martyred Guru should be taken away from the site of execution immediately after the Guru had been executed. This humble Sikh of the Guru succeeded in carrying out his resolve.

Such was the devotion of disciples that the father of Bhai Jaita asked him to behead him and keep his head in place of the head of the guru to confuse the authorities. He wanted that his son should gain time in this way so that he could make too his escape to Anandpur alongwith the holy head of the martyred Guru.

Bhai Jaita, it is said, hesitated to behead his own father. His father, however had no hesitation in laying down his life for the honour of his beloved

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Guru. He himself severed his head from his body. The famous Hindi poet Maithli Sharan Gupta has narrated this incident in his epic poem Bharat Bharti under the heading 'Guru Kul'. He says, 'The old man recited the Japuji and cut his own head. The son was startled. He bowed to his father and made good his escape with the head of his father'.\*

It was past afternoon when the Guru was brought to the spot outside Kotwali. As the Guru was beheaded by the executioner, the city was hit by a dust storm which clouded the sun and compelled all and one to shut their eyes. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by the dust storm, Bhai Jaita rushed to the tree under which Guru's beheaded body lay and with great reverence he picked up Guru's head and wrapping it in a piece of cloth he disappeared from the scene. On his journey to Anandpur he was accompanied by his two comrades Bhai Adda and Bhai Nauua. On the way to Anandpur he halted at Bagpat, Traori (Karnal) Ambala, Chandigarh and Kiratpur. Bhai Adda went to Anandpur to inform Guru Gobind Singh. It was decided to perform the cremation at Anandpur. From Anandpur the devotees came to Kiratpur. On the way they were singing hymns. With great reverence the holy head of the Guru was brought to Anandpur.

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\* *Savem Vridh he hij sir kata  
 Kar ji mein japuji ka path  
 Beta Chaunk para, jhatt usne vahin bap ko kia parnam  
 phir Gur sir le ke bach aya.  
 (Maithli Sharan Gupta; Guru Kul p. 119.)*

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The tenth Guru heard the tales about the martyrdom of his holy father Guru Tegh Bahadur. He held Bhai Jaita in embrace and said 'Rangrete, Guru ke bete' (Rangreta's are Guru's own sons. The cremation was performed with great reverence by Guru Gobind Singh on 16th November 1675. On the spot where Guru Tegh Bahadur's head was cremated stands Gurdwara Sis Ganj. Lakhi Shah and other Sikhs also came to Anandpur with the ashes of the mortal remains of the Guru. The Guru received them warmly and honoured them.

Bhai Jaita and his companion, Bhai Lakhi Shah and his sons showed remarkable courage in saving the mortal remains of the Guru from being dishonoured. This shows that Guru Tegh Bahadur's exhortation to his followers that they should not fear anyone, had gone home. Bhai Jaita belonged to the scavenger class but the Guru embraced him. Guru Gobind Singh was a Khatri. He belonged to the higher warrior class. The scavengers were untouchable. By embracing Bhai Jaita, Guru Gobind Singh rejected the Indian caste system and proved that he believed in the equality of all human beings. The Gurus had succeeded in imparting a new sense of courage confidence to the people of India. The heroic deeds of Bhai Jaita and his friends and Lakhi Shah and his sons showed that the people of India had regained their sense of self respect. They made it clear that the people of India would not submit to injustice and oppression. These disciples of the Guru who would not allow the mortal remains of their

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martyred leader to be dishonoured. It meant that they had acquired the strength to protect own honour and identity.

Ham ej kaj jagat mo aayye  
 Dharma het Gurdev Pathayye  
 Jaha Yaha tum dharma bitharo  
 Dusht dokhian pakar pachharo  
 Yahi kaj dhara ham janmam  
 Samjh lehu sadhu sabh manmam  
 Dharma chalavan sant ubaran  
 Dusht sabhan ko mool uparan.

— *Bachitra Natak*

(The Almighty sent me to the world to protect Dharma. He asked me to spread dharma everywhere and destroy the evil doers. Let the pious know for sure that I was born to spread the dharma, to rescue the saints and support them and to destroy evil and evil doers.)

### **A NEW RESOLVE**

The task of organising these fearless devotees of Guru Tegh Bahadur into a powerful force capable of fighting against the injustice of the Mughal state was to be performed by the tenth Guru. The education which he received at Anandpur specially the impact which the personality of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur made on his mind had created in him an awareness of the mission of his life. The fact that Gobind Rai who was less than nine years of age when the Brahmins had come to seek the help of Guru Tegh Bahadur, could ask his father to lay

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down his life for protecting the Brahmins, shows the level of spiritual strength which the child Guru had achieved at that tender age.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had no doubt whatsoever about his sons ability to lead the community in the hour of grave crisis. He had displayed an unusual sense of maturity and social responsibility. Gobind Rai had unique courage and a matchless spirit for self sacrifice. After the martyrdom, the Guru rose to the occasion. He truly justified the confidence which his father had reposed in him.

After the cremation of the head of the Guru amidst the chanting of hymns and tearful scenes, and the performance of other rites and the recitation of the holy Granth for many days, a congregation was held in which Gobind Rai was to be formally acknowledged the tenth Guru.

The day on which the special congregation was to be held, the city of Anandpur wore festive look. Devotees lined the streets to have a glimpse of their beloved Guru. Gobind Rai looked resplendent. His face radiated divine light. The relatives of Gobind Rai as well as the relatives of earlier Gurus had come to attend the congregation. The Guru was welcomed by the congregation with great reverence. He was taken to the platform on which had been placed the throne of apostleship. He was requested to occupy the throne.

The Ragis performed the Kirtan. The tilak was applied to the Guru by Ram Kaur who was a

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descendant of Baba Buddha. The Sikh Gurus always had the highest regard for the revered Baba who had the honour of performing this ceremony in the case of Sikh Gurus from Guru Angad to Guru Hargobind. He had come to the congregation with Baba Harditta who was the brother of Bhai Gurditta who was one of the five sikhs who had accompanied the ninth Guru to Delhi. There had been no controversy regarding Gobind Rai's taking over the leadership of the Sikh Community. The turban with the jewelled crested plume was placed on the head of Gobind Rai by Bhai Harditta. The Guru was also presented with an expensive shawl, a pearl necklace, a sword, a horse and a hawk.

Sikhs from far off places started pouring into Anandpur to pay their homage to the tenth Guru. Bhai Lakhi Shah also came to Anandpur with a group of Lubanas. He told the Guru how he alongwith his sons had succeeded in taking the body of the martyred Guru from the scene of execution. He had set fire to his own house to cremate the Guru's mortal remains.

The Guru said to Lakhi Shah, "were there no other Sikhs in the crowd? Why did they not come forward to disobey the Imperial orders?" Lakhi Shah said, "Sir, there were a large number of Sikhs in the crowd which witnessed the martyr dom of the ninth Guru. People were simply terrified. They were afraid of Emperor's anger. None dared to come forward to pick up the body. I was able to perform this task with the grace of Guru Tegh Bahadur who had

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bestowed so much courage and confidence on me. All the Sikhs were unhappy but they were terror stricken".

Guru Gobind Rai was pensive for a moment. Then he said, "I shall organise the Sikhs into a new Panth. I shall turn them into Singhs (lions). They shall have a distinct appearance. Even in a crowd comprising of lakhs of men my sikh will be distinct and conspicuous".

These remarks of the Guru can be considered as a pointer to his scheme of creating saint soldiers who would wield the sword to destroy the evil doers but think of the Almighty all the time. The Guru did fulfill his promise. He created the Khalsa a sect of saint soldiers. He organised the spiritually awakened people into a fearless fighting force which turned the tide of the history of the Sikhs and of Panjab. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the relentless efforts of the tenth Guru led to the overthrow of the unjust Mughal state and the creation of a Secular State under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

In the words of C.V. Vaidya the author of Medieval India the genius of Guru Gobind Singh created such a powerful force which ended two thousand years of foreign rule over Panjab.

It may be said that for twenty centuries from the time of Porus down to the time of Ranjit Singh Panjabis had no kings of their own. It was ruled by the foreign Hindu and malechh rulers from the times of Alexander to that of Mahmut; by Macedonians, by

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Mauryas, by Kushans, by Huns, by Kashmirians, by Sindhis and lastly by the Shahi kings of Kabul and after Mohammed by the Mohammedan kings of Ghazni and Delhi for eight centuries till the Sikhs gave to Panjab native kings after a foreign rule of over two thousand years.

